

Story 849 (1969 Tape 10)

Narrator: Nuri Genç, 68

Location: Iskenderun, Hatay
Province

Date: 1969

Fish

Fishing Forbidden

There used to be a lake not far from Rehanlı.¹ You could see the lake off to the right when you were crossing the Muratpaşa Bridge. It was a small lake with an island in the middle of it. Near that lake there was a small village which on one side had many black rocks sticking up from the ground. From beneath those black rocks a spring flowed, and the water of that stream was warm. As recently as five years ago, a considerable amount of water used to flow from that source and it was that water that formed the little lake. It provides little water now, and the lake has dried up.

We used to go duck hunting in that area. When we heard that there were fish in the warm water that flowed from the black rocks, we decided to try our luck at fishing there. When we started to fish there, however, several of the local people came to us and said, "For the love of God, stay away from those fish! They are not to be caught."

"What is wrong about catching them?"

¹Rehanlı is a kaza town located some twenty kilometers northeast of the city of Antakya (better known to non-Turks as Antioch).

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"This is a sacred place. Those fish belong to someone else, and you must not interfere with them."

"Well, then, what becomes of these fish?" we asked.

"The fish remain here and grow. They are perfectly safe here. But if they pass through the outlet of this lake and swim downstream, they are no longer protected. Then fishermen are permitted to catch them."²

²The following narrative by the same informant (ATON 850) may shed light on the meaning, and possibly the origin, of this story.